

The Evening of The Wedding

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The Evening of The Wedding

by [TigerPrawn](#)

Summary

Sometimes time and space rips apart to give two people to each other when they need it the most.

Notes

Part of my Tagged for Time Travel series - each instalment can be read individually, but this one would likely read better if you read part 1 first.

Chapter 1



Introduction

When the tornado of energy dropped from the bluff it sank, as their bodies once had, back when they had been Hannibal and Will, before they had become Kaecilius and Cal...

It plunged into the depths, into and through the planet, gathering momentum until it blasted beyond the confines of the atmosphere. Spreading like a wave of pulsing energy from the planet and out through the universe.

This was why Kaecilius had been warned.

Galen's hand flew to his belt and played over the small device there. It had been impossible to test. It was such a risk. And yet he only hesitated for a moment - remembering why he had built this, and many other secret little inventions under the Empire's very nose - to stop them.

These scientists knew enough to be dispensed by the Empire, but of use to the Rebels, especially if his message was unsuccessful. He had only a moment to react. His hand found the button, and pressed.

The alterations his actions might cause. The changes that now might happen.

The versions of them throughout the universe that might be brought together again and again in order to continually right the wrong Hannibal had wanted to, and now - as Kaecilius - did correct.

His teacup had come back together.

"I assure you that beyond this door you will find the flagship of the Duke of Buckingham, devil that he is. A place that you claim to be fictional but I know to be real. I suppose the

only way to resolve this is for you to see for yourself.” Her tone was definitely taunting.

Grigg rarely felt the need to rise to bait like this, especially where fictional people were involved. Even so he walked around to one end of the tub so that he could place his hand on the wall. As he did so the wall gave, opening as if a door, and he fell through it. Before he had a chance to right himself, he was on the floor and the door had swung shut behind him. Grigg got to his feet and reached for the door in a panic, to discover there was no door knob. He hammered on it for a moment but received no answer. “Let me back in, this is... what is this?” He was baffled and strangely now praying for encephalitis. “Please wake up, please wake up.” He pinched his arm and it goddamn hurt. Just as he was trying to decide what to do next, he was tossed sideways as the whole room tilted at an angle and then back, rocking until it reached a near equilibrium again. He could hear shouting and feet running - slamming into the wooden ceiling above him. He looked around him then from his vantage point on the floor. Barrels, rope, wooden crates. A rat ran across his leg and scurried behind a stack of crates. The shock of it had him reeling back until he hit the wall. Only it wasn’t a wall, it was the hull of a ship.

Across this universe, parallel versions, backwards and forwards in history throughout all of time - teacups came back together.

Chapter One

Jacob couldn’t help but be filled with a strange melancholy. The kind brought on by a life event that caused reflection.

His life had changed so much in the last five years - from the moment he had found out he had a grown daughter, Anna. And tomorrow she was getting married. Again.

Everyone’s life was moving forward, and yet his seemed still in the same limbo that swallowed him when he left India and discovered his daughter. The same limbo, that if he admitted it, had kept him India instead of returning to Denmark with Helene all those years ago. In those years she’d had and raised his child, married a great man, built a life for herself. Whilst he remained in limbo because he had been unable to really connect with her. Unable to commit as she had wanted and so he had stayed and she had returned.

He wasn’t unhappy, but he was very aware that the last five years he’d been living his life for other people much more than for himself. Just as with the orphanage in India, being back in Denmark and committing himself to his daughter and the business they worked in together.

It was avoidance. Yet another way for him to focus on something or someone else and not his own life. Not who he was or what he wanted. And that was okay, because his daughter needed him.

This marriage, for Anna, was at least a better fit than last time - though admittedly Jacob had only just met previous groom on that occasion. But their short acquaintance was enough to know he was no good for his daughter. In the last five years they had become close, not father and daughter perhaps, but maybe a long lost uncle. He enjoyed it nonetheless, and his renewed closeness with her mother. It was nice to rediscover her as a friend and rekindle all those things they had enjoyed about each other’s company in the past with no pressure for it to be more.

To a greater extent, his life was good. What it lacked was... easy to ignore.

Jacob shook off the thoughts as he got into the old-fashioned rental car, leaving the hire place behind and setting out to the hotel where the wedding party were staying tonight as well as tomorrow - after the wedding. The evening reception, after the afternoon church ceremony, was to be held there also. Anna wanted the convenience of it, and he couldn't blame her - weddings always seemed so full of extraneous drama.

The rest of the wedding party and any guests staying before the wedding would likely not check in for a few hours, but he'd promised Anna that he would head straight to the hotel and make sure everything was as it should be. She wasn't that struck on the hotel's wedding planner and she trusted him to handle any arising issues. He sighed happily, pretty sure that this was actually her way of making him feel involved as her mother was going to walk her down the aisle.

Yet another reason he should be happy, and not having the happiness marred by waves of unhappiness that seemed to follow him like dark clouds.

He should be happy with his life. He was in many ways. It was different than he might have anticipated before returning to Denmark five years ago, but as there always had been - something was still missing. It threatened to rise to the fore of his thoughts as the wedding approached, but he had become skilled at ignoring it for decades.

It was no more than twenty minutes between the church and hotel, out in this pleasant coastal countryside of North Zealand, but it seemed a strangely long trip this day. He wasn't even half way there when the sky turned the colour of a day old bruise and unexpected rain started to fall. Within minutes the beautiful landscape was obscured by sheets of rain so thick that he'd had to slow.

He was more cautious than perhaps he needed to be, but he didn't want to pay damages on the rental if he didn't have to, and driving the 1950s US import wasn't something he was used to. Jacob wasn't keen on how it was handling as the rain slicked the road, so he started looking for a place to safely pull off the road to wait for the worst of the unexpected storm to pass, hoping it would clear before the wedding.

Before he had chance lightning struck the road ahead. It cracked the surface and Jacob swerved to avoid the broken road.

As he did so he was blinded by light and felt a sickening pull within him. He kept his eyes open, trying to regain his vision, despite wanting to close them tight shut and brace himself for whatever fate was before him. He waited for the next bolt of lightning, or falling tree, or perhaps he would swerve off of the coastal road. It all seemed so possible in that terrible and unnatural moment.

Jacob presumed he blacked out as then his mind was suddenly filled with insane images. A purple sky, a man that looked like him - lots of men that looked like him. And one had crackling purple eyes, glowing with an unnatural energy. He held out his hand and shards of china rose in front of him. It was as though Jacob stood watching the man as the china floated up between them and then coalesced into a perfect little teacup. Another man took hold of the

cup, and then there were infinite copies of him too - all the same but a little different. The first man clicked his fingers and everything went black.

A horn sounded and Jacob saw lights - burning his eyes again, as he realised that he was in near darkness. Night had fallen... And this was not the coastal road.

In panic Jacob swerved to pull the car from the road and away from the oncoming headlights. His heart racing, his hands sweaty and breath leaving his tight chest in heavy breaths. He slammed his foot on what he hoped was the break and the car stalled, dying completely, as the engine spluttered and gave up.

Jacob's eyes were still adjusting to the darkness as he craned to look behind him. The car had now passed him and heading into the distance. It also looked like a vintage model, and American too. The strangeness of that struck him - Anna had had to look around quite some time to find the vintage cars for her wedding, and he didn't recognise it as one of the ones booked for the wedding.

Jacob turned back to facing the front of the car, gripped the steering wheel and tried to catch his breath, his mind reeling through all the possibilities. He looked out into the dark and made out enough to know that he had no idea where he was. The road was unbroken, no lightning strike. It was like he was somewhere completely different.

Was he dead? A heart attack, a stroke, head injury from the lightning or the crash? Each seemed as likely as the last despite his usually good health. What would they tell Anna? The day before her wedding day? He slammed his hands against the wheel.

Jacob was just about to lean forward to rest his head on his hands, confusion and hopelessness descending, but then there was a rapping on the window. His head snapped around and he could just make out the form of someone standing by the passenger window - swaying slightly in the rain - the figure knocked again. Two hard knocks and then one that faltered as it missed a direct hit at the screen. Jacob looked at the figure for a moment and then at the window itself, taking too long to realise the handle below it was for manual opening. He took it in hand and began to roll the window down.

"You could have ki-killed me!" The figure hiccuped, voice slurred, tripping over words. And most certainly American. He could make out more of the figure now, a young man soaked through from the rain, bottle in hand and cheeks rosy. "You almost hit me!" The man's tone was somewhere between amused and indignant as he followed his words with another hiccup.

Before Jacob could react the man was fumbling with the handle and opening the door. He dropped, sodden, into the passenger seat and gave Jacob a dopey smile. His English was good enough to understand the man.

"The least you can do is drive me home considering you almost killed me!" He giggled.

"I-" Jacob started and then stopped. What the hell was he going to say? What the hell was going on?

“Look friend, my name is Buddy Wittenborn and tonight it is my sister’s wedding! So... don’t dally.” He giggled again and then passed out.

Jacob wondered if it could all be a hallucination. Perhaps he had some terrible illness that had chosen a really shitty day to take hold. A brain tumour or encephalitis?

Buddy Wittenborn snored softly either way.

*

When Buddy woke his neck was stiff and he felt like hell.

He groaned and tried to stretch, realising immediately he was crunched up in the front seat of a car. He looked around him, trying to remember what on earth had happened the night before. After a moment he heard steady breathing and turned to see there was a man, dressed in very casual attire, curled up on the backseat, sleeping. His brow was furrowed and he looked cold as he huddled under his jacket. Buddy wondered, firstly, if the man was having unhappy dreams. And secondly, who the hell he was. He didn’t recognise him from the wedding, but then... he’d been drinking since the afternoon... or the morning, he wasn’t quite sure. He was sure he likely might not have recognised his own mother by the end of the evening, much less some stranger he had never met before - maybe one of Lila’s friends? Dressed like that, perhaps he was a servant? But the car was very expensive for a servant. A valet?

It mattered little. Buddy just wanted to get home, wash and strip naked and crawl under the blankets of his own bed to sleep off the rest of this hangover. He had barely any memory of the night before, and the few blurry snippets he did recall made him shudder with anxiety.

Perhaps the man sensed he was watching him because his eyes snapped open, then narrowed in on Buddy’s own. Much of their encounter the night before came back to mind with those eyes so intensely focused on him.

“Hello.” Buddy offered a smile, though his head ached too much for him to truly mean it deeply. “You didn’t drive me home.”

“I...” The man seemed about to answer, likely an excuse. Maybe he hadn’t known where Buddy lived? Which seemed unlikely if he was indeed attending the wedding in some capacity. Perhaps he was a curious interloper - very intriguing.

Before either of them could continue, Buddy’s attention was snared by movement and the tinkle of laughter outside of the window. He turned to look out through the trees beyond the road and saw Ann and Harris walking arm in arm. As lovers might. They must have been in Harris’ little cabin from when they were young.

The sight tore through Buddy and put him in a pain he had never experienced. And that, Buddy felt, was really saying something.

There was a sourness in his gut that had started to brew the moment two worlds had collided and he had seen the way Ann and Harris looked at each other when he introduced them. No

look spared for Buddy. It was jarring - this idea that made him feel queasy - and he was still unsure of it. His childhood obsession with Harris that had turned into a teenage obsession with Ann... and he wasn't sure which he believed until that moment.

Until he saw Ann throw her head back and laugh at something Harris said and his heart broke with jealousy.

He fought the urge to wretch as his head fell forward into his hands, an anguished cry escaping him as he did so.

"I'm not a hero." He repeated over and over, words coming out of him where air wouldn't, to the point that he was near hyperventilating. Words that came back clearly to him now in Ann's voice - that she had shouted at him in her anger the night before. *You're not a hero. You're pathetic.*

She was right.

"Hey." There was a hand on his shoulder and he barely registered it at first. Then it was gone and he felt the car rock as one door opened and closed, another opened and someone was sat next to him, a hand on his shoulder and one on his thigh - trying to ground him.

"Hey, Buddy. Buddy? It is Buddy yes?" The voice was thick with an accent Buddy couldn't place beyond Northern European.

"Yes." Buddy finally managed to confirm, his breath coming in sobs. His eyes felt raw and were clouded with tears as he sat back and looked at the man next to him. "Who are you?"

It took a moment for the man to answer, as though he didn't immediately understand the question. "Jacob." He finally replied, perfunctory.

"I'm sorry Jacob. I... This isn't your problem. Can... Can you just drive me home." He tried to hold back more tears that stung in his eyes and then added hurriedly. "No... actually, to New York? Anywhere? I'll pay for the gas, I just need someone to take me from here. I can't be here."

Running away.

I'm not a hero.

The thought sent a painful shudder through him. He wasn't brave like Harris or Lila, not brave enough to stay. Not brave enough to leave. Not brave enough to be himself. Not brave enough to do anything other than he had done for years - lose himself in the bottom of a bottle of booze.

"I... don't know the way." Jacob replied and Buddy couldn't work out if he was annoyed or apologetic. Maybe it was the accent.

"Take me home." Buddy sighed, resignation sitting heavy in his chest. "I can show you the way there at least."

Jacob nodded and turned in his seat until he was comfortable, starting the car and waiting for directions. Lanes opened onto the vivid green grass of a cliff top, a beautiful white house dominating the skyline - dominated his life. Their summer 'cottage'.

They had driven in silence, not even asking anything about each other. Buddy didn't know Jacob's situation and why he was there, but he was too focused inward on his own concerns to even ask anything of anyone else.

When they pulled near to the cliff, Buddy asked Jacob to stop. Locally they called it 'The Plunge', this little area that they jumped from for fun or as a dare. As they had the night before, as he had... He remembered Ann's expression beforehand and jumped not caring if he resurfaced. But he had and Ann had despised him for it - for living or for not dying? It was a blur now - an alcohol fueled haze. He just remembered the pain of it and the need to make it right... trying to find her and Harris. And then... there was Jacob.

His curiosity about the man suppressed everything else for just a moment. But one look at the cliff brought everything overwhelming back.

Was he in love with Harris? No, no that had been a childish fancy. Was he in love with Ann? No, that had been a diversion. She was pretty and fun, and close to Lila. He could see her as someone his parents would hate him to settle with, for all the fun she was, but would accept it as a better option than...

And he would have pursued it, it would have been easy. His choices were limited, because, he might have grown out of that crush now, but he *had* been in love with Harris.

It may have been only a childish fancy, but it had shaped who he was. He had never known himself better than when they were together as children. It had been a deep cutting pain within him when he realised that these were not feelings he should have or express.

Feelings he wasn't meant to have.

He obsessed over Ann, kept that stupid note she had given him years before, because he was too afraid of how he felt and it was easier to fool himself into thinking he loved her. Wanted to marry her so he could run from this forever.

I'm not a hero.

Easier to drink and love Ann. Because being himself was not an option.

He choked back a sob.

"Buddy, can I help you?" Jacob's words sounded considered and full of concern.

Buddy wasn't sure he could take the concern of a stranger, so instead he opened the door and walked to the edge of the cliff he had jumped from the night before. The most recent of many times he had taken that joyfully ridiculous plunge. And yet even as he had, he had seen the happiness reflected between Ann and Harris and hoped not to surface from the water. Maybe that's what Ann had been angry about? Maybe she could see that it had wounded him.

He couldn't be happy for them, his own selfish despair was too crushing to allow it. He didn't desire either of them but he envied what they could have, something he never could. Something beyond his reach.

He stopped at the edge and felt his body tremble as he started to crumble again. Their rejection of him was the final chink in this dam that would no longer hold. Maybe he could throw himself over now? Fill his pockets with rocks to replace that stupid note.

He shook with the sobbing, feeling like he might collapse. He stepped forward. If he was to collapse, let it be at the edge of the cliff, let the fate that eluded him the previous evening now take him. All his life he felt like he would disappear, that one day he would vanish and he sought to ensure that people would remember him - think of him when they saw a tree or bird that he had told them of.

For a moment that was enough, to be remembered, and he knew how easy it would be just to take a step further...

But then strong arms took hold of him, turned him and wrapped around him - pulling him back from the edge and into a tight embrace.

Buddy sobbed into the chest that he was held to, feeling safe and comforted in a way he couldn't remember ever having been in the past.

The embrace felt familiar, like he had been here before on this bluff, in this embrace. On the verge of falling, on the verge of losing everything. It was so strong it was almost a memory. It made him gasp and bury his face into the crook of the neck before him.

Jacob.

Who was Jacob? He was so familiar, but he knew they had never met before.

"Will you take me from here?" Buddy asked. "I changed my mind about going home. I can't... I can't see their happiness and pretend that I'm okay. I... I can't see their love and pretend that I am not jealous with every bone in my body that I cannot have that. That I..." The words made him choke.

I'm not a hero.

He pushed the thought down. He could admit this here, words lost to the wind on the clifftop in the arms of a stranger that felt so achingly right, ensconcing him as they did. Like they had always stood on this bluff in each other's arms. The familiarity startled and comforted him at once.

"I.. I can't be happy for them because I can never have what they have. I can never be Ann and fall into Harris's arms as she can..." the admission choked him again. He felt both heavier and lighter for having said the words, as small as they seemed.

Even so the arms tightened around him and he felt a press of lips in his hair. It sent a shiver through him and his heart thud almost painfully.

Jacob must have sensed the tremor.

"I... I'm sorry." the words came stiffly from the man. "I don't know what made me do that."

"Will you help me?" Buddy blurted regardless. "Take me away from here please."

"Yes." Jacob breathed the word against his ear. "I'm lost too."

*

It had taken a great effort to pull back from the young man in his arms. His dark hair, soft under his lips, his eyes bluer for their wateriness, his face perfectly beautiful. It was as though they knew each other somehow. That despite never having seen him before the previous evening, there was such a familiarity. The same feeling that had made him absent-mindedly press his lips to the man. The same feeling that weighed his heart at the sadness there.

He had never ached to hold someone before, never felt nourished by their presence. It didn't quite make sense in his mind that this man was a stranger.

"I'm lost too." He muttered. "I don't belong here and I need to get back to my daughter. She is getting married today..." It seemed like such a strange thing to say when today didn't appear to be today at all. He was not in Denmark, and he was fairly certain he was not remotely in the right year. There was no rational explanation for it, and yet he was sure it was real. Not a sickness or accident, because Buddy felt so real in his arms. He felt the like the most real thing Jacob had ever known. It was only having Buddy in his arms that was keeping him from completely freaking out about the whole situation.

Buddy took a few calming breaths and looked up at him, trying to fix his resolve. "I'll help you. I want to leave and you have somewhere to be. I will help you get there."

His smile was back but Jacob could see through it. It struck him as a sudden realisation - that he could see it so well because he had the same smile. The one that hid everything behind it. Every little bit of despair that he had never dealt with and the he could see Buddy dealing with now.

Jacob clenched his jaw at the revelation but gave a curt nod before turning back to the car, strangely filled with absolute faith that he would get home.

*

You know what you've got, Sis?

You have got a talent for love.

You're like a love genius.

And there's too many statues of generals and politicians, and there's not enough statues of someone like you. You know?

But in this world, in this world there's so much of what looks like love, and sounds like love, and it calls itself love but it isn't.

It's just people saying and doing what they think that they ought to say and do.

And you...
You're the greatest.
So here's to love.
And here's to you.

Buddy's drunken speech the evening before, rolled through his mind. He wasn't even sure if he had actually said it, or anything remotely like it. For all he knew he could have spent the dinner passed out at the table and this memory was just a drunken dream.

"I need to stop drinking." He found himself admitting aloud.

"Yes?" Jacob asked and he looked across to see the man taking a side on look at him before returning his eyes to the road.

They were almost at the house, only a minute from the bluff, and not a bit long enough to prepare Buddy for seeing his family. He had asked Jacob to take him there, but his plan was to get together a few clothes, maybe some books. A sensible act of running away, not some foolish attempt that ended with his need for clean laundry.

He needed time and space, he needed peace. And once he had helped Jacob get to where he was meant to be, he could find somewhere to stop and get his head together. Deal with this spark within him that he didn't dare kindle. Take a moment to mourn it and extinguish it as he was sure countless others had done before him.

To do that he needed to stop drinking. It was going to kill him, one way or the other. He knew that. Stop drinking and marry a lovely young lady that his parents approved of. But then... he had thought this so many times before and then got drunk again.

"Here, just pull around the back." Buddy changed the topic as they approached the house. "I just need to... Will you come in with me?"

Buddy waited for a response as Jacob stopped the engine and turned in his seat to look at him. He must have seen the desperation there, because he frowned a little and nodded. If he went in alone, ran into Ann or Harris or his mother... then he might never leave. He would put on the fool's mask and pick up another bottle.

"Of course." Jacob put a hand on his knee and Buddy closed his eyes. He took a deep breath and wondered how every small touch from this man could cause such insanity within him. A craziness of thought that he might have something like this. Someone like Harris. That he might be himself. A stupid folly.

He brushed Jacob's hand away and got out of the car, even so he was relieved when he heard the other door and knew that Jacob was following him.

"Buddy!" The cry was full of happiness and anger. "Where on earth..."

"Hello mother. I'm sorry if you worried. I'm afraid, I was a little tipsy last night. I decided to sleep in the car." He let out a chuckle and his mother's face betrayed her usual thoughts of disappointment. And then her eyes darted to Jacob behind him, a frown growing.

Buddy cleared his throat. “Oh, did I not say? I sent for a man... driver, uh, valet. Both really. Lucky that he arrived last night as requested. Just in time for me to-”

His mother let out a heavy sigh. “Buddy, perhaps you should wash up and we can then discuss you taking staffing matters into your own hands.”

“Certainly mother.” Buddy nodded. “Jacob can... assist. I shall be back after my bath.”

His mother seemed vexed, as she often was with him, but said no more. She turned and started back down the hallway - from whence he could hear Ann and Harris talking animatedly.

A wave of nausea overcame him and he swayed on his feet a little. Jacob was there behind him in a moment, steadying him and then helping him towards the stairs. “I think I might still be a little more intoxicated than I had thought.” He tried to laugh but couldn’t even do that. Instead he lead the way, all the while Jacob’s hand pressed lightly and reassuringly at his lower back.

*

When they got to Buddy’s room everything felt clearer.

The car, the clothes. The house and Buddy’s mother. And now the room. This might not be a dream but Jacob was unsure how it could be reality. Everything was old fashioned - vintage but new. Decades out of place... or Jacob was?

He was about to ask Buddy what year it was, when the young man threw himself into his arms. Jacob steadied him as best he could as Buddy buried his face in his chest once more and began to quietly cry.

Jacob ran a hand up and down his back, letting the other play softly at the nape of his neck. After a few minutes the sobbing subsided but they did not break apart. He felt Buddy relax into him, and he found himself taking the moment to feel every part of what was happening. Buddy’s lithe and firm body against his; his musky male scent, obscured somewhat by the reek of alcohol; his hands now mirroring Jacob’s.

It took him a few minutes to realise that Buddy’s breath was shuddering against him and a few seconds longer that the same was true of himself. He could feel himself quivering - the intimacy of the moment more intense than he knew anything could be.

Buddy pulled back and looked at him. The young man was only a fraction shorter, but even so he seemed so small framed. Fragile. Jacob wanted to protect him.

They looked at each other a long while, before finally - in an aching moment - Buddy cautiously leaned in and pressed his lips to Jacob’s.

It was tentative and chaste. But it was everything.

A flood of emotions welled within Jacob as he started to kiss back. Somehow free for the first time he could remember.

*

Buddy clung to Jacob in desperation.

“Please...” He found himself muttering. “Please.” Soft words against Jacob’s lips before he kissed him again. He was desperate to feel. The burning need inside him to experience something - anything - with a man. With this man, who had been so kind to him and who seemed to understand. Who seemed so familiar and comfortable - as though they had been intimate friends for years.

Jacob’s hands came up and framed his face as he kissed him ever more deeply. It was intoxicating, more so than anything Buddy had consumed in the last twenty-four hours. He moaned into Jacob’s mouth and brought his hands up to his shirt, taking hold and walking them backwards to the bed.

They went down softly, he shuffled backwards as Jacob crawled over him. In truth he had very little idea of what he was doing. He had fooled around here and there, but this felt so different.

“Will you touch me?” He asked, breathlessly. He wasn’t even sure where the words had come from, only that they had formed the moment he had thought them. The want and desire to finally be touched the way he wanted to be, the way he needed to be.

“This... this is insane. Maybe I’ve gone insane.” Jacob muttered the words against Buddy’s skin as his lips moved to his neck.

He wondered, from his words, if Jacob might change his mind even so. But he didn’t. He sat back on his haunches between Buddy’s legs and began to slowly and carefully unbutton Buddy’s shirt. His breath was coming out in sharp breaths, the same as Buddy’s, chests heaving as they did this forbidden thing that they both needed so desperately.

Buddy was shivering, shaking and panting, as Jacob pushed his shirt off of his shoulders. He watched as Jacob surveyed his bare chest. The man bit his lower lip as he contemplated him for so long that Buddy was expecting rejection.

Instead quiet words came forth - “You’re... very beautiful.”

Buddy let out a sigh of relief and then chuckled. “I’ve never been called beautiful before.” He felt his cheeks growing red.

Jacob grinned at him, suddenly wholly at ease. “You should be told everyday... I’d tell you every day.”

Buddy’s breath caught at that, and the sight of Jacob’s cheeks reddening as he looked away. Buddy put a finger under his chin and guided him back, drawing him forward until they were kissing again. Moments later Jacob was easing down him, kissing his throat, his clavicle, down his chest until he finally took Buddy’s right nipple into his mouth.

Buddy let a high and shocked noise. It felt so good, so very good. His cock ached and he could feel his underwear growing damp from the copious leaking.

Just the thought of it spurred Buddy on. He pushed forward, moving Jacob back so that he could undo the man's belt and trousers. After a moment, Jacob was following suit until they both had peeled back enough layers to plunge their hands into each other's underwear. Buddy inhaled sharply, a gasp, as he felt Jacob's velvety cock in his hand the same moment a warm hand encircled his.

He was shaking again, felt tears stinging the corners of his eyes. He was so overwhelmed, so very beautifully overwhelmed by the moment.

"Please..." He repeated again as Jacob lowered himself to his side. They shifted very slightly so that they were breathing into each other's mouths - parted lips so close - as they began to move their hands. Jacob's stroked him softly, and Buddy let out a whimper at the touch. He was near sobbing as Jacob leaned in and took his mouth.

It was that that spurred him on to his own action - pulling Jacob free enough to mimic his long pulls, their hands brushing each other as they stroked.

They were both panting and shaking as they moved in ever quicker motions. He felt Jacob thrusting up a little into his fist but had no way of doing the same. He was already so overwhelmed by this touch he had always craved, to even attempt it. And it was unnecessary - in a very short time Buddy felt his balls tighten and his climax pool from his very centre and radiate out. It took him almost by surprise as it welled up and then immediately arrived, pulsing through him until he spilled all over Jacob's cock.

When he did so, Jacob let out a groan before thrusting two more times up into Buddy's fist and coming himself. His had been fast - a sudden spurt of come that had hit as much of each of them as it had Jacob's hand. Jacob on the other hand spilled slowly, messing over his hand copiously, and continuing to pulse and spill for what seemed like minutes.

Buddy was so sorely tempted to bring his hand to his mouth and taste, but it seemed somehow indecent. Which, given what they had just done, was truly laughable.

Buddy grabbed the shirt he had shrugged out of, that now was scrunched up next to him. He pulled it around and cleaned his own hand before passing it to Jacob to do the same. Jacob gave him a bashful smile as he took it. He cleaned his hand before proceeding to clean the come that had spattered on his shirt and on Buddy's bare abdomen.

"Beautiful." He said again and Buddy felt himself come undone.

*

They lay on the bed, Buddy in the crook of his arm as he stroked the boy's arm that was slung across his middle. They were disheveled - trousers in a state, Buddy topless whilst his own shirt was untucked, wrinkled and damp with come.

The desperation that had gripped them both had passed and they were left with the emotions that came with it.

“I’ve never done that before... With a man.” Jacob voiced what he felt was likely already obvious.

“But you wanted to.” Buddy said, clearly not a question.

Jacob took a deep breath and released it slowly. “I have never admitted as much to myself before, but... yes. I’ve always wanted to, if I’d have allowed myself to know it.”

Buddy tightened his grip on him and Jacob held him closer in turn.

“Life is complicated. Ann... she shouted at me last night. She called me pathetic and said I should have the guts to live my life. To kiss boys if I wanted to. As if it were as simple as that.” Jacob could hear a hint of humour through the sadness.

“It was as simple as that with me.” Jacob tried to cheer him.

“Ha!” Buddy chuckled. “I’m not sure I’d call it simple. What might have been the worst night of my life is rescued by a complete stranger who seems to understand me as well as I could claim to understand myself. Who practically appeared out of nowhere... In fact, where did you come from?” At the last, Buddy perched himself up on his elbow to look at Jacob.

A good question that he was still unsure of the answer to.

“I’m not sure you would believe me. Some sort of accident I guess, but one I can’t regret for having met you.”

“Tell me Jacob, what have you done with your life until this moment? I’ll confess to a total intrigue.”

Buddy’s smile was magnificent, made all the more so by the ever rising sun that was now spilling through the windows and casting everything in warmth. He was casual and easy, relaxed against Jacob as he reached over and grabbed a packet of cigarettes from the night stand. He struck a match and lit it before relaxing deeper into Jacob’s embrace as he took a deep inhale and let out the smoke slowly.

He seemed more confident, more himself somehow - though Jacob didn’t think he was one to judge that. Even so it left him with the urge to lean in and kiss the boy’s bare shoulder - which he did. It brought forth an amused sigh of contentment from Buddy that was music to Jacob’s ears.

“Any other day I would have said there wasn’t much to tell. But...” He took the cigarette from Buddy’s fingers and took drag of it before letting it out quickly and passing it back to Buddy. “When I was a younger man I took a trip to India with the woman I loved... Thought I loved. When she returned to Denmark, I did not.” Buddy pressed the cigarette to his lips and let him draw once more. He began speaking on the exhale. “Most assumed I was afraid

of commitment, and in a way they were right. I just... couldn't commit to her. It took me years to even let myself come close to considering why."

He stopped there for a moment. Because as close as he had come, it was meeting Buddy so few hours before, that had been the catalyst for the floodgates to open. The realisation of the lie his life had been.

"She was pregnant. I didn't know."

Buddy twisted to look at him then, his expression scandalised. "And out of wedlock?" Buddy teased.

Jacob huffed a laugh. "Yes, well, she married. A good man. We became friends just before he died. Five years ago he brought me back to Denmark and that was when I discovered he had married Helene and that Anna, the child he had raised, was actually my daughter. I have been in Denmark ever since. Building that relationship. She's a great woman. Kind and clever, and anything anyone can ask for in a daughter."

Buddy let out a pained sort of chuckle. "Must be nice to be considered so highly by a parent."

Jacob leaned in and kissed the boy's shoulder again. "That is all that has happened to me really. Until last night. Today is my daughter's wedding and last night I was running errands and got caught in a storm. I somehow ended up here."

"From Denmark?" Buddy drew on the cigarette against whilst frowning over his shoulder questioningly. There seemed no ridicule or taunt there though.

Jacob nodded. "Denmark. And Twenty Eleven."

"20-11? What does that mean? Is that a road? Like Route 66?"

"No." Jacob shook his head, wondering once more if he was mad as he continued - "The year. Twenty Eleven."

Buddy sat and turned to look at him, the bare skin of his torso was smooth and pale and Jacob realised he hadn't quite had enough of it. He trailed his fingers down Buddy's back out of necessity for the contact, as Buddy replied -

"Well, that's over fifty years from now." He let out a laugh that could almost be described as giddy. "I might not believe you but for the fact of a vague and drunken recollection of your car appearing out of nowhere on the road last night." He was still smiling as he stopped and seemed to consider a moment. "Jacob, it is either a fact or a lie and either way I think you are likely the most exciting person I have chanced to meet in a very long time."

He grinned and Jacob grinned back as Buddy leaned in and kissed him. When he pulled back he shook his head in amusement.

"My problems seem so pale in comparison. Come on, let's pack a few things, freshen up, and then I will help you get home in time for the wedding."

Jacob's heart swelled at the acceptance Buddy had for him and more so for the connection he was sure Buddy felt as well. Perhaps the reason he so readily believed. It was like they were conjoined, always destined to meet and now something had shattered or else come together and allowed this.

"How do you propose we do that?" Jacob asked, somewhere between serious and amused.

"First off, I think we should try going back the way you came." Buddy grinned.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

More time travel and another wedding...

Buddy dressed in some comfortable, smart slacks and a light sweater. He packed only a little - a few clothes and a picture of his parents and sister from which he was notably missing. It was a lovely photo - regardless, or because of his absence, he wasn't sure. He had been indisposed when it was taken - unable to partake as he had disgraced himself. His mother hadn't spoken to him for a week after that, not that he could blame her. It was far from the first time he had let the family down by being drunk or hungover. It was just the only occasion with a visual reminder available.

Nonetheless it was a lovely picture and Lila looked especially radiant. And if there was something he would always be a huge supporter of, it was his sister being radiant.

He took a few minutes to write out a short note to her. He wrote that he loved her and always would. That he had to leave and maybe wouldn't be back, but that he had gone in search of happiness and needed her to know that he would find it at all costs and hoped she did the same. He hid it in the little shell covered box she had made him many birthdays ago - leaving it on his window sill. Many times they had left little trinkets and candy in that box for each other, so he knew she would look there once he was missed.

There felt a finality in his actions. And it was more than just going with Jacob, and Jacob's fantastical story. He'd had a sense since the night before, since coming back up from his cliff dive, that he was no longer really there. Or there on borrowed time. As though that fall should have killed him; his drunken body should have been dragged under; Jacob's, or someone else's car should have hit him as he wandered aimlessly in the road. It felt like a night when he had skirted close to death, and now he had finally disappeared as he always knew he would.

"You look thoughtful, is everything okay?" Jacob asked. He sat on the bed, clothes disheveled and watching Buddy as he packed and pottered about. They had continued to talk intermittently, Jacob speaking of Anna - how young he'd been when he fathered her, how he'd grown since knowing her. Buddy found himself talking of Lila, of Harris. How in not so many hours he had gone sailing with Harris and felt a sort of faux freedom that he always did when he was with Harris. And hours later had heard his sister retell how Harris had been her first kiss. How lonely that had made him feel.

Buddy found himself longing to return to the bed and press his body and lips and soul to Jacob's. It wasn't the first time he'd been so inclined with a man, but the first time he felt that he actually could really immerse himself in it. And he knew he shouldn't, knew the scandal

and hatred it would bring him from his family alone, but he didn't care. For the first time in his life he truly didn't care. It didn't feel wrong or unnatural. It didn't feel like something he should hate himself for. And it didn't matter - he was leaving.

Buddy responded with a question of his own - "What is it like where you are from? I mean... for... men..." he struggled to find the words. *Homosexuals? Queers?*

Jacob swallowed and looked away for a moment, clearly understanding Buddy and maybe feeling self conscious.

"I... I can't speak with any authority. I've never... before you, I'd never..."

Buddy blinked and nodded. They were discovering this freedom together then, allowing themselves to have it.

"It's okay though." Jacob continued. "I mean, there are still bigoted people in the world, but... being gay is socially acceptable in most places." He seemed tentative. "I uh, my friend Lucas married his husband last year..."

Buddy's eyebrows flew up and he couldn't help the broad grin that suddenly hurt his face. The idea of it! The very idea! How deliciously scandalous and perfect. He could only imagine his mother's face if he relayed this to her.

His mother wasn't a terrible person, ogress as she could be. But he knew the reason that she and by extension his father, put up with his drinking. Because it was the less embarrassing alternative. As much as his father might say "why don't you sit down Buddy?", "time for bed Buddy", he'd rather that than admitting the truth. A truth worse even than the thought of Lila, or even himself, getting involved with a servant.

When he was younger he had told his mother that he thought Harris was beautiful and that maybe one day Harris might marry either him or Lila. But he hoped it was him because he would like to kiss him. That revelation, innocent as it had been, had earned him a slap across the face and a stern, cold warning not darken the family with such infamy as it would bring. Over the years, drinking had been a way to forget and suppress. The idea that there was a time and place where people were different, attitudes were different...

Buddy dropped down onto the bed, his smile gone and the ache in his heart bittersweet. A sort of petulant anger welled in him - why couldn't he have had that?

Perhaps Jacob understood, because he felt the bed lift and sink as Jacob moved next to him and pulled him into his arms.

*

Jacob's mind was reeling.

He wasn't sure what was more fantastical - this strange relocation in time and place, or his sudden and overwhelming connection with a stranger?

They had opened up something in each other that had been long hidden, but the connection went deeper than that. They were conjoined in some way, as though they had known each other for years. Now that they had met it felt like it would be a great loss to be parted from each other. If Buddy had asked him to stay he may well have considered it. If not for Anna - he couldn't leave her again, especially now that he knew of her existence.

When he comforted Buddy it was a mutual comfort. They were both overwhelmed by this and yet neither could pull away from it. He held the boy close and kissed his hair. And it felt like the most complete and right thing he had ever done.

It took an effort to separate and the looks in each others eyes gave away the truth - the need and desire to be intimate again. But it didn't feel like the time or place to continue that, and as strange and wonderful as this had been, Jacob couldn't allow it to distract him from Anna. He had only been in her life for the last five years, there was a lot he needed and wanted to make up for. Missing her wedding was not going to happen whilst he still had breath in his body.

They finally stood, Jacob righting his clothing and Buddy grabbing his bag. The house was quiet, despite the sound of people up and about when they had arrived earlier.

"They'll all be in for lunch now." Buddy told him as they made their way down the stairs. He looked thoughtful and a little sad.

"Do... do you want to say goodbye to them?" Jacob brouched carefully. He wasn't sure if Buddy really was coming with him, whether he would drop him somewhere, he just knew he selfishly wanted to take him.

Buddy let out a chuckle and shook his head. "You know, I have the strangest feeling that I'm not meant to? That I shouldn't be here." This time when he shook his head it was to clear it, he smiled sadly at Jacob. "Besides... My sister already left, she's on her honeymoon. Thankfully... If I tried to say goodbye to her I'd end up staying. She has a way of ordering me around and I have never been able to deny her anything."

He looked so small and sad. Jacob was about to remind him he could stay if he wanted, when Buddy perked up - pushing his sadness down.

"We should get on the road. There's a shop in town, we can buy a map there. Make our way to New York and then go from there. We'll work this out." He turned to Jacob on the last words, gave him a reassuring smile and squeezed his hand. Jacob nodded.

The day was bright and clear, as though the previous night's storm had happened somewhere else. Buddy threw his bag into the back of the car and they got in.

"Are you sure about this?" Jacob pushed himself to ask.

Buddy let out a little chuckle. "It might be madness but it's the only thing I've been sure of in my life. I... I have this sense that i'm not meant to be here. I've never really belonged, but... like I was on a timer and it has run out. I don't know what it all means, I just... I want to help you get home. I... think I want to go with you. And not just because you are the first - the only - person to have made me feel that my proclivities are not something shameful or

wrong. I feel like you saved me. I feel..." He trailed off and turned in his seat to more fully look at Jacob. "I feel. For the first time in a long time, I'm not drinking to blot those feelings out. I don't want to. I want to feel them, I want to feel the way you make me feel."

His words were earnest and his expression determined. Jacob had no way to fight it even if he wanted to. He took Buddy's hand and squeezed it, setting it on his own knee as Buddy settled back into his seat and Jacob started the car.

*

On his way to being totally lost to both his emotions and - more practically - in location, Buddy found he didn't care. He was utterly carefree and light, more so than he was sure he had ever been.

This was only slightly marred as they approached that old cabin. The place he had seen Ann and Harris leave. He was angry or upset, not in any way hurt as he might have been - as he was a few hours earlier. Before he and Jacob... He wasn't sure he could imagine being intimate like that with Harris - as much as he'd often fantasised about it. No, what had happened with Jacob was so different, so much more real than even a conversation he'd had with anyone else. He had a vague recollection of drunkenly trying to kiss both Ann and Harris the previous evening, and the thought now made him shudder - in a different way than it might have. The thought of either of them having been receptive, of them not going off together and drawing him after them, the thought of not meeting Jacob as a result.

That thought hurt.

Buddy watched as the cabin flashed in and out of sight between the trees. He let out a chuckle. It all seemed so insignificant now.

He saw Jacob's head turn to look at him, quizzical expression for a moment before there was a loud crack ahead of them and they both faced forward.

It had sounded like thunder but the day was calm and beautiful.

"What the-" Buddy couldn't finish his sentence as the road before them was suddenly gone. He had a sick feeling in his stomach, like he was being pulled along the road by his internal organs, by his heart and soul. It took a moment for his eyes to adjust and realise that the road had not gone but they had been plunged into the darkness of night, and into a storm.

Suddenly everything was too loud - rain lashing against the car as Jacob tried to keep them on the road. Clearly he had been affected by the same odd jump, and now had to right both himself and the car as it slid on the rain and mud slicked road.

Buddy gripped the seat as the car twisted and moved sideways. He knew he should be terrified, but he wasn't. This wasn't his time, it had passed. He had an undeniable feeling that he had skirted death and that it had been for something more. A flash storm was not going to change that.

For a moment everything was too bright - blinding.

Buddy closed his eyes and it was brighter than having them open - a sudden rush of bright images. Men that looked like he and Jacob - the air swirling purple and a smashed teacup rising from the ground and coming together.

When he opened his eyes again there was only the rain and the car swerving.

After what seemed like minutes but was likely seconds, Jacob managed to wrestle the car into submission and slowed them, pulling off to the side of the road and stopping the engine.

Jacob was panting and looked strained but relieved.

Buddy looked out the window, it was so dark. Too dark to just be the storm, as though night had fallen around them. Another, longer look, revealed that this was clearly no longer the road they had been on. A road he knew so well was replaced by one completely unfamiliar to him.

He couldn't help but let out a bark of laughter.

"Jacob! Are you home?" He couldn't begin to imagine it would be so simple.

When he turned to look, Jacob was shaking but smiling. Relief, perhaps and the shock of near spinning out of control.

But quickly his face grew grim. "It's... it's the evening. Have I missed the wedding?"

Jacob tried to start the engine but it wouldn't turn over.

"Are we far?" Buddy asked, truly concerned. He couldn't begin to imagine how hurt Jacob would be if he missed his daughter's wedding.

Jacob shook his head dismissively and tried the starter again - another futile effort before he rested his hands on the wheel.

"I... I don't know anything about cars like this. Vintage, American..." Jacob shrugged, looking a little overwhelmed with defeat. "How can this happen? How can I go all the way to where you were, and then come back to this? The world broke and folded in on itself and when it unfolded it left me stranded here."

"Wait." Buddy said, opening the door, immediately battered by the heavy rain. "I know a little about cars. Not much, but..." He jumped out and walked to the hood, flipping it to take a look at the engine. It looked fine, other than the steam pouring out, from the things Harris had taught him - nothing his inexperienced eyes could find. He started to grope almost blindly at it, until his hands were dirty with oil and grease. Feeling the heat almost burning his fingers before he pulled them back. The steam might have been from the engine being exposed to the rain, but maybe it was just overheated - it wouldn't be surprising. Buddy didn't have any water, now way of cooling the engine, he just hoped letting it cool the rain would get them a little farther. He gave it another minute before dropping the hood.

Jacob tried the engine again and after a moment of groaning it finally kicked in.

Buddy was grinning as he rounded the car and dropped back in, soaked through to the skin and dirty up to his elbows.

"Thank you." Jacob smiled at him, such a deep and true affection there that Buddy lost the ability to breath for a moment.

"You're welcome." Buddy finally managed.

Jacob gave a little nod, colour creeping up his cheeks, and then pulled off into the rain.

*

Jacob had wanted to speed to the hotel, but it wasn't worth chancing his luck. He didn't want to end up in any way further waylaid. Within minutes they had cleared the storm, and looking behind them it seemed to have vanished entirely. The sky was lighter - much earlier that it had first seemed though still too late for the wedding, Jacob knew.

When he pulled up at the hotel he excused himself and ran inside, depending on Buddy to understand.

"Good evening sir. How can I help?" The receptionist was all smiles.

"The Hansson-Larsen reception, has it started?" Jacob rushed through the words, every nerve in his body was pulled tight with tension. His skin prickled with nerves as he considered that he had already missed the ceremony, not been there with the car, not been there for Anna. How could he even walk into the reception now? What could he say to explain what had happened?

The receptionist frowned and clicked several times on the computer before her expression brightened. "I have it in the calendar for tomorrow - Saturday - is that not correct?"

Jacob frowned just as a light hand touched his back. Buddy stood next to him, seeming all the more drenched for being indoors. Jacob found himself appreciative of the light touch, leaning into it slightly.

"Tomorrow? Saturday?"

The receptionist nodded, a small frown creasing her brow ever so slightly. "Yes, that's tomorrow sir."

Jacob let out a breath, a sigh. It came from so deep within him it shuddered. Somehow they had returned to the same day, to yesterday. He felt tears prickle the corner of his eyes.

"Is everything alright?" It was only Buddy's question in English that made Jacob realise he had switched back to Danish, of course. He turned to Buddy and gave a smile and a nod.

"The wedding is tomorrow." He explained in English this time. He turned back to the smiling receptionist. "I have a room booked."

She nodded and took his details, before turning to Buddy and asking - "And you sir?"

"He's not..." Jacob spoke up, then cleared his throat. "He's an unexpected guest."

"Let me see if we have any available-"

"No, that's quite alright. I don't mind paying any extra for him to share my room." Jacob said it with more conviction than he felt. The words hard and irrefutable even as his cheeks burned. He knew it was presumptuous, but the thought of being parted right now was too painful.

The receptionist's smile grew all the more genuine, her eyes softening. "Perfectly fine sir, the charge is by room only not per person. I will get two keys."

She moved to the end of the reception area to activate two key cards as Jacob let himself slump further back into Buddy's hand until Buddy slid his hand around his waist so that they were completely pressed together.

"Everything okay?" Buddy asked again, concern in his eyes.

"She is uh... she's getting the keys for our room."

"Oh." It was a small sound accompanied by wide eyes and an instant and deep blush that made Buddy look as drunk as the moment they had met. He understood the slight look of apprehension there too. This was something they had both never addressed in themselves to an extent, to this freeing extent. And they had just begun to scratch the surface with each other - having to present that to the world, whatever *that* was, was daunting and surreal. More so than their happenstance meeting.

Buddy swallowed hard but then tightened his grip around Jacob until he could feel the rain water soaking through his own layers.

The girl returned with the key cards and a pleasant smile. "212. Second floor, the lifts are just over there. Please call reception if you need anything. Breakfast is 6am until 10am."

Jacob swallowed and nodded, his heart thundering.

He wondered if this was what it would have been like if he'd snuck around as a teenager, in the way he had so longed to do before pushing down all those feelings and desires. Thinking of Buddy, his situation - how much more dangerous and alienating it was for him - it made him angry at himself. Sure, he may still have encountered danger, and it would have paid to be discreet, but he didn't even try. Didn't even consider mentioning it to his parents, who he was mostly sure would have been upset but would have got over it.

"Thank you." Jacob managed, still more than a little dumbfounded by life in general. He turned and walked them to the lift.

*

Buddy was trembling, and not from the cold damp soaking into him.

This was utterly bewildering. He thought for the millionth time on how this should be terrifying, but something about Jacob's company made it feel almost ordinary. It should feel alien, and yet as he stood next to Jacob in an elevator unlike he had ever seen before, in a hotel that was all bright colours and clean edges, it didn't. It felt right.

Jacob shrugged out of his jacket the moment the doors closed, placing it around Buddy's shoulders.

"You're frozen, you should have a hot bath or a shower." Jacob's words were soothing, rumbled low and so close. It made Buddy shiver all the more.

That had Jacob pulling him tight, clearly for warmth as much as anything, but the fact that he cared to do so struck Buddy. He had a lot of fair weather friends - those who had an interest in him when he was paying for the drinks. A fumble here and there with girls who wanted a safe experimentation and boys who were happy to mutually pretend to not remember having their cock sucked when they sobered.

He had close friends who seemed to just tolerate him a lot of the time and he had to consider that, to them, he was just packaged with his sister. Two for one, unfortunately.

The list of people he thought would hold him close and care for his well being were so very limited in number that he considered that it began and ended with Lila.

He sank against Jacob's strong form, letting the realisation that he had left his sister behind really hit him.

"I've got you." Jacob murmured against his ear, supporting him as the elevator door opened. Buddy tried to snap out of his sudden haze of sadness but it swamped him. Before he knew it they were outside a door and Jacob was opening it by placing a small plastic card into a slot.

Should I be here? What is this place? He needed a drink.

He must have been looking at the door strangely because Jacob smiled sweetly at him and said - "Where I lived in India was very poor, very different. When I returned to Denmark, so many things didn't make sense. Like landing on another planet."

With a slow and deliberate care, Jacob opened the door and placed the card into a slot within the room that caused the lights to come on. Buddy chuckled and shook his head - another planet indeed.

He closed the door and then Jacob pulled him into his arms, turning Buddy so that his face lay against Jacob's chest.

Buddy let out a soft sob and smiled. This was why he was here. Not just this man, not just any man - he would never be so foolish as to follow anyone on a whim - no matter what they promised or how drunk he was. But this man? There was something there he knew he would never find with anyone else and couldn't live without.

The sob turned to a light laugh.

“This is madness.” He looked around the room, seeing items that looked familiar and alien at the same time, right down to the light fixtures.

Jacob pulled back a little so they could look at each other, a small smile on his face. “I agree, but here we are... and I don’t want to be anywhere else.” He paused for a moment and Buddy could see there was something else he was trying to say. Finally, he added almost breathlessly - “Thank you for helping me get back to my daughter. If I didn’t make it to the wedding...” He trailed off and shook his head. His expression clearly showing that he didn’t want to even contemplate how painful it would have been. Buddy understood - he would have felt the same about Lila’s wedding.

Buddy snaked his arms around Jacob’s neck to embrace him, to hold him and be held. But as their bodies closed together Jacob’s mouth captured his.

Buddy felt himself shaking again, or perhaps he had never stopped? As he moved his arms further around Jacob, the jacket fell from his shoulders and Jacob ran his hands over the back of his soaked sweater.

“We need to get you out of these clothes.” Jacob’s voice was low and quivering when he pulled back to speak. Buddy could do little more than breathlessly nod his agreement. They parted enough for Jacob to run his hands to the front of the sweater, before taking hold of the hem and pulling it up.

“Am I... Are you going to be naked this time?” Buddy followed the question with a light laugh, though he meant it in all seriousness.

Jacob smiled nervously and started to pull the sweater over Buddy’s head. Despite the trepidation there, Jacob replied with a firm - “Yes.”

They continued to undress each other with slow and gentle care. Jacob kissed along Buddy’s shoulder when the sweater fell to the floor. When he pulled back, Buddy pressed forward to kiss him again whilst he tugged at Jacob’s belt.

They ended up next to the bed by the time they drew apart again, this time hurriedly divesting the rest of their own clothing, whilst watching the other intently. Buddy was naked first and allowed himself to fall back onto the bed, reaching up arms to Jacob.

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The sight of Buddy, naked on the bed, was astounding. It made his heart thump, it made his nerves tingle. He was less and less able to identify why he had never been with another man, other than to allow the romantic fiction that he had been saving himself for Buddy.

He lowered himself over the boy, lining every inch of their body’s up by instinct, so that when he pressed to Buddy, they slotted together perfectly. Their cocks were flush against their bellies - trapped between them; their legs tangled just so. He had propped himself in such a way that he was able to kiss Buddy whilst running his left hand into Buddy’s curls.

With no words spoken they began to move against each other, friction building between their bodies that might ultimately bring them both to an enjoyable conclusion.

And he wanted that. Not just for himself, but to pleasure Buddy. He wanted to do anything and everything for the boy. Keep him warm and safe, love him and make him see he is worthy of that love. It felt like he knew Buddy in this short time better than he had known almost anyone else in his life.

When he felt Buddy shiver against him, Jacob stopped moving - an end to the building pleasure between them. He drew back enough to look into Buddy's eyes, run a hand down to caress his cheek.

"You're still cold, I should have-"

"No." Buddy interjected. "I... I'm fine. I..." He trailed off and Jacob found the nervousness in his expression entirely relatable. "I've never done this before. I mean... I've fooled around. But... I've never had sex." He looked sheepish and embarrassed.

Jacob's heart swelled, further adoration at the intimate confession.

"I'm nervous too." Jacob admitted, though Buddy hadn't said the words. He brushed his lips over Buddy's. "I've never been with a man. I wanted to... But never... it never happened. And, now I'm glad we get to share this together."

Buddy seemed to be shaking all the more. Nerves, excitement, maybe even a little fear. Though none of it showed in the bright smile that grew on his face.

"I don't think I'm ready to... uh." Buddy tried to find the words. "I'd like to take it slow, build up to... things." The nerves and fear were definitely present in his words and Jacob immediately understood. Buddy didn't want to be penetrated. Not yet, maybe never. He felt the same way. He had no good idea of the practicalities, and certainly didn't have lube and condoms. He wasn't even sure whether he would want to fuck Buddy, or have Buddy fuck him. The possibilities seemed suddenly endless and overwhelming.

"It's alright. I want to take it slow too." He hoped the words and his smile conveyed that it was something they could discuss as and when they wanted, no pressure to rush into anything beyond what either of them were comfortable with in that moment. Buddy seemed relieved and Jacob felt entirely the same.

They started kissing again, but no longer moved, which Jacob was glad of. He had been close to coming and didn't want to come too soon. As they kissed his mind went through some of those possibilities. He had watched some gay porn here and there - enough to have a basic idea of the most basic of things. Jacob's mind kept coming back to Buddy's lack of experience, the sadness there had been in his eyes.

He wondered if Buddy had ever truly had a satisfying sexual experience, hopefully not including their own earlier encounter. He wanted to give Buddy that, allow him to feel the pleasure that could be found in sex, beyond just the climax.

Jacob moved off of Buddy and onto his side, pulling the boy with him as they continued to kiss. Buddy's hand wandered to his cock and Jacob let out a low moan at that. They could repeat their earlier enjoyment or...

Jacob shifted, bringing his hips as flush to Buddy's as possible. He snaked a hand between them and took Buddy in hand, enjoying the boy's gasp into his mouth. He slowly stroked, thumbing at Buddy's slit and spreading the copious precum that was leaking from him.

Buddy broke the kiss, his own hand stilling as he started to lose himself to Jacob's ministrations.

Without words, Jacob parted his thighs a little and fed Buddy's cock between them until his hardness rested beneath Jacob's balls. The sensation made him groan a little. Not that it could be heard over Buddy's sharply panted breaths.

Jacob placed his hand on Buddy's hip and began to rock him in encouragement, studying Buddy's face as he did so. The boy chewed on his lower lip, his eyes rolling back in pleasure as Jacob squeezed him between his thighs. His own cock was still trapped between them and the friction of Buddy's movement was pleasurable, though maybe not enough to get him off. It didn't matter. He wanted to give Buddy this.

He leaned in and kissed Buddy again, moving his hand up from Buddy's hip to the back of his neck, playing at the hair there whilst holding him close.

At the loss of Jacob's hand on his hip, Buddy faltered a little, but then found a rhythm. Sliding his cock only a little as he rocked between Jacob's thighs. Jacob began to meet each delicate thrust until they were both rocking together, Buddy fucking his thighs with abandon. Each press against his balls a new thrilling spark of pleasure.

Buddy devoured his mouth hungrily, pent up desire he had never before felt able to act on and Jacob was delighted to be on the receiving end of it. He let Buddy plunder his mouth, push him back a little so that he was almost over him as he continued to fuck him.

As Buddy's fingers dug into his shoulder the kiss broke. Buddy's expression was strained with pain and pleasure. He was out of breath, trying to take in air whilst his hips pushed ever forward.

"You're so beautiful." Jacob repeated words he had told Buddy before. He nipped at the long and now exposed column of Buddy's throat as the boy threw his head back. As he nuzzled under Buddy's jaw he could feel his pulse hammering against his lips.

"Jacob... You're so... this is... I'm..." The words were barely audible, made up from grunts and groans. Buddy's hand moved down to Jacob's hip in a mirror of their previous position, and gripped him. He used the purchase to thrust with ever more precision and need. "I'm going to-"

Buddy's words ended in a cry and his hips jerked uncontrollably for a few moments. The sight and sound was almost enough to bring Jacob over the edge. He was suddenly very aware of the hot, wet between his legs and moving down the back of his thighs. The thought

of being covered in Buddy's come in such a way made him groan. He leaned back a little, took his cock in hand and then stroked only once before he spilled between them - over the stomachs.

Buddy was trembling. "I never... I didn't know it could feel like that. Between two men. I thought that..." he shook his head but Jacob was sure he understood. Being gay was so wrong for the people around Buddy that he couldn't even acknowledge the attraction. If he'd never found much pleasure before, why would he believe he could find it in something he was told was wholly wrong?

Jacob rolled Buddy onto his back, draping himself over him and resuming their kiss as their mutual mess began to get sticky and cool.

As they continued to kiss and caress for what felt like hours, Jacob started to wonder what more lay ahead for them.

*

The banging on the door woke Buddy with a start.

He felt Jacob wake just as suddenly next to him, before the man practically fell out of the bed, tangled in both Buddy and the bedsheets. He landed on the floor with a thud, tripping over the small case he must have retrieved from the car during the night.

Buddy blinked the sleep from his eyes as Jacob pulled on some underwear and a second knock came with a concerned female voice - "Jacob?"

A moment later Jacob was at the door, opening it only a crack as Buddy grew all the more nervous and ashamed. An automatic reaction at the thought of being caught in the room of another man.

He heard the sigh of relief from the woman he couldn't see. Then there was a rush of words, tinged with more of that relief, but Buddy couldn't understand them - Danish.

The words were quick as was Jacob's reply. He spoke quietly and soothingly - an apology. The exchange lasted a couple of minutes before goodbyes were said and Jacob closed the door. When he leaned into it, head resting against the door jam, Buddy scrambled from the bed and went to him.

"Are you alright?" He asked gently as he placed a hand to Jacob's lower back. "Is everything okay?"

"It was my daughter, Anna. She had been worried that I didn't show up last night. She asked reception and they said I had checked in, so she wanted to make sure everything is okay."

"And... is it?" Buddy asked, cautious.

Jacob turned, Buddy's hand moving as he did so that it now rested near his belly button. It felt almost like as intimate a touch as any they had shared yet. His smile was bright and the tears in his eyes clearly were not indicative of sadness.

"Yes, I told her I had car trouble and that then I had... Someone helped me - a friend. And that... they were here with me. She was surprised." He laughed. "But she was just happy that I was okay and that I would be here for the wedding."

Buddy smiled, after all Jacob's worry of having thought he'd missed it, and the relief when they had arrived at the hotel - this was even better.

"She... wants you to come to the wedding reception." Jacob said tentatively. "I said I'd ask."

Buddy swallowed.

"I'd love that." The words left him in a rush.

Jacob grinned at him and he was sure they must feel the same thing - this was the start of something. It had been the start of something when they had met, when they had first kissed, when Buddy left his home and everything he knew. It made something as big as going to someone's wedding feel right and uncomplicated.

"We come back here from the church immediately after the ceremony, so you can join us for the evening." Jacob was still grinning and it filled Buddy with ridiculous joy.

It felt like only hours ago that he had seen so little worth in himself, and yet now he had worth to Jacob. And more importantly he felt worthy in himself - Jacob had showed him there was nothing wrong with him or his desires. He could be himself and be loved for it.

If that's what this was. What it could be after so short a time. He knew it was, or at least the potential for it to be so - as though they had known each other much longer, a deeper connection forged by the same strange circumstances that had brought them together.

He pulled Jacob to him, initiating another kiss and hoping they had time for more.

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Jacob's heart had been pounding all morning. From kissing Buddy goodbye to arranging all the vintage cars to take Anna and her entourage to the church. The ceremony had been beautiful and Anna had been radiant in a way that made his heart ache with happiness. Blood had rushed in his ears the whole time and he couldn't help but think of Buddy now and then - his palms sweating as a result.

In all the joy and love it was a blur returning to the hotel, but Jacob knew he had to talk to Anna before anything else. When he saw her and her mother start off to freshen up he caught up with them and stopped them.

"Wait. Anna... Helene, there's something..."

Anna turned a bright smile on him and immediately grabbed him into a big hug.

“Jacob, there you are.” She pressed a kiss to his cheek. “Thank you so much for everything today. I’m glad you made it.”

“Of course. I would never miss my daughter’s wedding.” He was pleased to be able to say it. She fell back from his arms and smiled at him, her hands moving down to his so that they were still in an almost embrace.

“Hopefully this will be the last.” She laughed and her mother joined in. Jacob’s heart swelled, completely sure it would be. “We’re just going to freshen up.” She started to pull away but he kept hold of her hands, looking between her and her mother.

“Wait, I need to... There’s something I need to tell you. My friend, who helped me with my car.” He swallowed, looking between the two of them, noting both their expressions were getting ever more puzzled. “It’s... my friend, Buddy, he’s a man. I just... I thought you should know. I didn’t want it to be a problem.”

He looked down for a moment and wondered if Anna would pull away. Instead she squeezed his hands, hard. He looked up and she was smiling fondly.

“That’s great dad, it’s... it’s really great. I don’t... I wasn’t expecting it, but if he makes you happy he makes me happy.”

It wasn’t lost on Jacob that she called him dad, for the first time ever and quite unexpectedly. He pulled her back into a tight hug, squashing her until she laughed and tried to pull back.

“I can’t breath.” She chuckled. She kissed his cheek again and stepped back grinning. “I’m so happy for you. This is such a happy day.”

“Anna, honey - you go ahead I’ll catch you up.” Helene said quietly, a gentle smile for them both.

Anna nodded, squeezing Jacob’s hands again before she dropped them and started off down the hallway. Helene came over to him and pulled him slowly into a hug. She let out a long sigh, and stroked his back.

“How long have you known?” She asked.

He shook his head. “There’s not an easy answer to that.”

He could hear the smile in her words when she replied close to his ear - “I’ve known since India. It never felt like my place to... ask. I’m just glad that this is happening now.” She pulled back and was smiling at him so warmly, so fondly. Tears pricking at her eyes.

“I can’t wait to meet Buddy.” She grinned.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Despite some harsh realities, there will be a happy ending.

After Jacob left, Buddy showered once he'd worked out the mechanics of it - a button on a large white box rather than faucets. He wandered the room in a towel, taking everything in - all the same as back home whilst, at the same time, being remarkably different.

And yet, he didn't feel out of place.

He didn't feel lost, for the first time he could really remember. He didn't feel as though he was about to disappear into nothing. And it was the place as much as Jacob.

Perhaps he had always had this idea of a great and consuming romance, that he never truly trusted that he would have. And it struck him that this wasn't what that was. He thought about Lila and Karl - how they had met and got to know each other. It all seemed so superficial but just how things were done. And in the last day he felt like he knew Jacob better than Lila would ever know Karl. Perhaps great romance didn't exist? And he couldn't say he cared, because this connection between him and Jacob was so much more.

He gave up everything, his life, his family - to help Jacob get home. To stay with Jacob. It was fate, he felt that so strongly, but more than that. There had been a finality to the evening of his sister's wedding. An end point, it felt. This feeling had come over him a few times since then and now he sat on the bed, damp in his towel, to examine it.

From the moment he had come across Jacob's car, life had changed. When Jacob had appeared the other car had swerved and whooshed past Buddy - he recalled now in a clarity provided by his sober mind. If Jacob's car hadn't appeared out of nowhere, the other car would have kept on coming and -

The thought sent a shiver over him, like someone walking over his grave.

If not for Jacob he would have been hit. The image of his own body laying, bloody, in the road flashed into his mind so briefly that it startled him.

He should be dead. And he wasn't, because of Jacob. Because of whatever strange and fantastical magic that had ripped through time and placed them together. The same images that had flashed through his mind in the car, returned. Him and Jacob and other men bearing their likeness... and the teacup coming back together.

Buddy opened his eyes, panting, almost falling off the bed. He took a few deep breaths, trembling and wondering that he should be terrified - he should be worried he was going

mad. But he knew this was real - all of it - everything he had been through and everything he was seeing now. Something, some sort of power, had pulled he and Jacob together, and many, many others like them. And he knew why - with all of those images he had sensed loss and reunion - love. A great and powerful, obsessive and consuming love that was sending waves through time itself.

The thought was overwhelming - too big for his tiny and insignificant life.

Buddy launched himself off the bed and to the little fridge Jacob had grabbed cold water from that morning. He found immediately what he sought - a chilling bottle of wine. He jerked it from the shelf so fast that the whole fridge rattled, glass shelves sounding as though they might clatter into each other and smash.

He steadied his hand and took a breath.

Lila always said he should stop drinking. He knew he drank too much and until now he hadn't cared. It was an anaesthetic he had needed to function in his life. The first thing he reached for when he was overwhelmed or upset.

His hand trembled on the bottle. Regardless of any mental or emotional reasons, this was more than that now - his hands were shaking and he felt sick. He needed to have a drink.

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Jacob felt buoyant when he returned to his room. The thought of seeing Buddy drew a bigger smile from him with every step. He couldn't remember the last time he had truly felt like this. He felt young and alive, and wanted to wrap himself around Buddy and never let him go. It was the opposite to his romantic feelings so far in his life. Even with Helene, he had never felt this burning need. This consumption.

As he walked he thought about their meeting. He had been so distracted with getting back to Anna, that he hadn't thought too deeply about what had actually happened. And what really *had* happened? How did he go from driving through Denmark to suddenly in America? Strangely it felt as though Buddy had drawn him there, as though they were connected by some thread and that had opened up time and distance between them.

It was ridiculous. He might have thought he'd imagined the entire thing - a head injury or something - had he not the physical evidence of Buddy.

The thought made his blood run cold for a moment - fear. What if this really was in his head?

He jogged the rest of the hallway to his room and fumbled with the keycard before letting himself in, giving a sigh of relief when he saw Buddy lying on the bed. He was breathing softly, his torso was bare and his slender hips swamped in the pyjama bottoms he must have snatched from Jacob's luggage.

It was only as he closed the door and approached that he realised Buddy's rosey cheeks and the half drunk bottle of wine stood on the floor next to the bed.

"Buddy?"

When Buddy opened his eyes they were sad, and Jacob felt a sharp stab of pain through him. Perhaps this wasn't the fairytale he had let himself imagine? The look in Buddy's eyes was one of desperate unhappiness that made Jacob ache.

"What's wrong?" He asked, tentatively making his way to the bed. Wanting to comfort Buddy but at the same time not wanting to be inappropriate if - as seemed possible - Buddy was having second thoughts about all of this.

"I just... I didn't want to. But..." He waved a hand dismissively at the bottle of wine. His speech wasn't slurred, he was more tipsy than drunk which set Jacob in mind immediately to how much Buddy must usually imbibe for half a bottle to have had such little effect. Buddy falling drunk into his car played over and over in his mind. He had just assumed he had drunk to excess at his sister's wedding.

"Buddy..." His name came out on a soft sigh as he looked at the boy. He looked small and vulnerable and Jacob wanted nothing more than to gather him up and hold him tight. "Why were you drinking?"

Jacob didn't breathe as he awaited an answer that he was sure could end all this in a moment. *This* - whatever it was - that felt so good and right. That felt like coming home. Maybe he had been wrong?

"It's what I do." Buddy waved his hand and again and forced a chuckle. Then he closed his eyes tight before slinging an arm over them as though to hide himself. "I guess it's just who I am." There was a slight sob in the words. "I can't remember when I haven't been drunk. It felt like the only way to exist, to be me and be able to live... I needed to be numb. And..."

The words were choked off.

Jacob went to him then, sitting next to him on the bed before pulling away his arm, continuing to pull until Buddy was guided up and into Jacob's embrace.

Buddy's sobbing was almost silent even as he shuddered against Jacob, and Jacob felt the tears soaking through the shoulder of his shirt. He wasn't sure how long they sat there like that before Buddy composed himself a little.

"I'm sorry. I don't want to be numb anymore, but I... I thought I could stop. I thought I would just not have another drink. I tried, I tried not to." His words were so pained, full of self loathing and something else. It sounded like fear - which seemed confirmed to Jacob when Buddy added - "Please don't leave me... I will stop, I promise. I... I promised Lila so many times, but she never understood. She never knew how numb I needed to be. And... I knew she would never leave me. Please don't leave me..."

"Buddy..." His name was soft in Jacob's mouth again. "How could I leave you when time rearranged itself for me to find you?" He pulled back and smiled at Buddy's red and blotchy face. Jacob brought a gentle hand up to wipe away the tears that lingered on his cheeks.

"I'm broken... like a shattered teacup." Buddy lamented, his words almost a whisper.

Jacob frowned at the phrasing. The images of the night he met Buddy coming back - the ones that had flashed through his mind in a split second that he had barely processed, now came back like a recovered memory. Himself, but not himself - and another, who he realised now was Buddy. Many copies of him and none actually quite him. Forward and backward in time and to the far reaches of space. A teacup coming back together.

"Jacob?" Buddy's tone and expression were heavy with concern. Jacob took a moment to focus fully on his face before realising he had sort of spaced out.

"I saw a teacup." He said, unable in that moment to find the words in English that would fully describe what he had seen. Strangely, his words brightened Buddy's face.

"I did too." His smile was bright for a moment, glorious, and then it faded. "It feels like fate brought us together and... it's unfair. You've been stuck with me. I'm not going to come together like that cup."

Jacob hushed him and pulled him close again. "Buddy, you.... you have a problem, but it's nothing that can't be... you can get help. If you want to stop, there are people who can help you."

Jacob couldn't even begin to imagine what Buddy's life must have been like. To feel so trapped and to be made to feel wrong and invalid. To not be free to be himself. It was clear to see why that might drive someone to drink, to hide in the numbness it provided. If the numbness was no longer wanted or needed, it wasn't so easy just to stop - cold turkey. As much as someone might want to.

"We can stay up here if you like? When the wedding is over, and we leave tomorrow, you... You can come home with me." He hadn't considered up until this moment what would be next for them, only that there was a next - that he couldn't imagine a future without Buddy in it. "I know people who can help, groups you can attend... You aren't broken Buddy. You're beautiful, and as flawed as any human."

Buddy drew back again and studied him, as though trying to work out whether he was being serious. As though he expected Jacob to discard him as one might that broken crockery.

Jacob smiled softly and moved his hands up to cup Buddy's face.

"I used to drink. When I was with Helene, before we broke up and she... I told you already, I didn't know about Anna for twenty years... because of the person I had been. Helene was wrong to do it, of course. Wrong to not tell me about Anna regardless. But, looking back - I can understand why she made that choice, even if I don't agree with it. I was a drunk, a junkie... I slept with many women, including Helene's friend. Which is why she left me. And all to ignore who I was. Who I am." It felt like the story was so known to people and yet, there was an aspect that had always been hidden. Jacob let out a shuddering breath. "I... I behaved badly but I never let myself admit why I acted out in such a way. I... stayed in India those twenty years, I started to work in an orphanage and found a purpose. But also a

diversion that I knew wouldn't have if I returned to Denmark back then. When I finally did return Anna and the aid work we do became my new distraction."

"A distraction from who you didn't want to admit you are." Buddy replied softly.

"You are such a gift. This connection between us, I... I've never had anything like this, And I know it isn't just because you are the first man I've allowed myself to be with. I know it is more than that. Something, some power brought us together and it knew what it was doing. We fit perfectly, like we are blur into one. I will take you, flaws and all, because I don't think I could ever bear to be without you."

Buddy let out a soft noise that wasn't quite a sob, and Jacob leaned in, pressing his lips gently to Buddy's. He kissed him so softly - chaste at first and then something more. Slow and tender, but consuming.

"I want to go to the wedding." Buddy smiled, a meagre thing that was almost a question. "If that's ok? I'd like to go."

*

Buddy had another shower. He felt refreshed and a marginally more sober. He was still fuzzy and, damn he wanted a drink. But he felt awake and fresh. He'd wrapped the fluffy hotel towel around his waist and picked up the trousers he'd been wearing the day before, laying them out on the bed. He felt very conscious of Jacob watching his every movement, and couldn't help but find it equal parts amusing and arousing.

In the bag Buddy had packed there was one nice shirt, he had pulled it out to find it was wrinkled and in a ball. He clenched his jaw for a moment before Jacob took it from his hands and shook it out.

Jacob smiled fondly at Buddy in a way that had his heart melting, and then he picked up the phone and spoke quickly in Danish. Buddy had the sudden thought that he would need to learn Danish. He'd love to be able to say so many things to Jacob in his native tongue.

Jacob hung up and grinned at him, moving to the door and then hanging the shirt on the other side of it. When he turned back he strode to Buddy and placed his hands on his hips.

"Are you alright?"

Buddy nodded. Jacob's hands didn't leave his hips and his heart started to thud as Jacob stroked the skin just above the towel. They were both breathing heavily as Jacob's hands worked at the towel loose.

"Do we have time?" Buddy asked. "Won't they miss you?"

Jacob shook his head. "There's another hour before the evening reception. Everyone is freshening up... I... just want to make you feel good. Is that okay?"

Buddy let out a shuddering breath and nodded again, not trusting himself with words as Jacob knelt at the same moment the towel fell. Gentle fingers kneaded his hips, making Buddy's

legs shake. And that was before Jacob leaned in to nuzzle at the thatch of hair above his quickly stirring erection.

“Jacob.” Buddy moaned his name the moment his mouth moved downwards. Nuzzling and kissing, until Buddy was completely hard and leaking. He’d done this before - given head to some silly boy or other, but had rarely been on the receiving end. When he had been it had been a means to an end, rough and with teeth. Unrefined as they sought to get him off quickly and with little actual care for his pleasure - just quid pro quo.

“I’ve never done this before.” Jacob chuckled as he pulled back. Buddy looked down and his face was flushed. His eyes wide and eager as he licked his lips. “I just... I want to make you feel good, I want to bring you as much pleasure as I can.”

Buddy bit his lower lip and nodded, trying to convey that he wanted to do the same, but Jacob may have taken it as a prompt as his mouth then sunk down and took Buddy all the way to the back of his throat. Buddy’s hands shot into Jacob’s short hair, taking hold and gripping, needing something to anchor him rather than control Jacob’s movements.

Jacob pulled back with a suck before sinking back on him - repeating the movement over and over with more precision each time. His tongue becoming more confident and proficient. His mouth fitting so perfectly around Buddy that he could barely stand.

“Nnnng, Jacob.” He could feel pleasure pooling deep inside him, his balls drawing up. He wanted to last longer, but the sensation was driving him insane.

Jacob doubled his efforts, one hand sliding up Buddy’s abdomen to pinch his left nipple.

With a stuttered groan Buddy came, spilling hot and fast in Jacob’s mouth.

Jacob continued to suck and lick, pulling back slowly to swallow down everything Buddy had.

“Oh my god.” Buddy collapsed back on the bed, his cock making an audible pop as it left Jacob’s mouth and continued to soften between his thighs, spent. He was panting as he fell back completely on the bed, chest heaving and body trembling. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to... so soon... I... It was so good.”

He heard Jacob chuckle. “It’s okay.” He came into view rubbing his jaw. “Probably for the best, I think I might need more practice to be able to do that over a sustained period.”

Buddy laughed and reached for Jacob, loving it when the man fell into his arms and kissed him. He had never tasted himself on someone else’s lips before - it was intoxicating.

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Jacob could feel the nervousness practically vibrating off of Buddy.

“They’ll adore you.” He muttered against Buddy’s ear as they approached the noise of the function room where the reception was being held. He held himself back from adding - *as I do*.

He wasn't sure he'd ever adored anyone as much. Jacob had been in love before, or as close at least close enough - with Helene. It was why they actually had worked so long, why it had taken the drastic life change of the trip to India to shake Jacob out of it. There had been so much about her to love - they would have been perfect together. And that was the rub, because they never could be, as much as Jacob had truly tried. If he'd known about the pregnancy he would have continued to try. He would have made it work as much as possible.

He would have never met Buddy.

Before they entered the room, he pulled Buddy tight to his side. "I mean it... they can't not adore you. I don't know how anyone couldn't." The words rumbled from his chest and everything felt warm. Buddy's anxious face lit up with a smile that spoke of how little anyone had showed him such believable affection.

Jacob vowed that would never be the case again.

"Hello!" Anna's voice betrayed her excitement as she and her husband, Felix, greeted guests as they arrived. She first leaned in and kissed Jacob's cheek, squeezing his hand as she did. When he moved on to shake Felix's hand, Anna pulled Buddy into a tight hug and spoke in near perfect English - "It's so lovely to meet you."

Helene stepped forward and greeted them when the happy couple released them. She held two glasses of champagne out for them. He noticed Buddy hesitate before taking the glass but not drinking. Maybe this had been a bad idea?

He was unable to immediately think on it more when Helene guided them to a table where sat several family and friends.

Buddy seemed to ease once at the table, his only agitation being the glass of champagne that he had placed in front of him and seemed to be using a great deal of energy trying not to focus on. After a few minutes, the conversation was going - everyone making the effort to speak only in English for the benefit of their guest. Some were more proficient than others but Buddy's appreciation was clear.

When the conversation was in full swing, Jacob subtly moved Buddy's glass to the other side of himself and then looked over for a waitress. The waiting staff were going table to table topping up champagne and bringing out bottles of red and white wine. He caught one's eye and she made her way over.

"Can I get something non-alcoholic?" He asked in Danish and despite Buddy not understanding the language, he turned to look at Jacob - concern in his eyes. When the girl smiled and nodded he continued. "Soda and lime please." He then turned to Buddy. "I'm having soda and lime, do you want something? Cola?"

Buddy's face seemed to flood with relief and he nodded, his smile weak but thankful. "Soda and lime sounds good."

The girl gave a curt nod and started off. No one seemed much to have caught the exchange but even so Jacob felt compelled to do as much as possible to make Buddy feel at ease.

"We had a late night." He chuckled in English. Then he took Buddy's hand that was resting on the table and laced their fingers together.

There were a couple of looks of surprise but no one seemed unhappy with the revelation. Some perhaps guessed that Buddy was essentially his date. Helene hadn't said anything when she had brought them over to the table, and he knew she would have felt it wasn't her place to say - only introducing him as Jacob's American friend. No one had been impolite enough to ask who Buddy was to Jacob.

Now smiles grew, the situation clear but unspoken.

He felt Buddy squeeze his hand and then lean towards him a little. It felt completely wonderful, and right.

*

Conversation had been strange if pleasant. Some of the other guests at the table asked him about America and he found himself being vague with the realisation that his America might not be as it had become. He spoke about his house, the local area, how picturesque it was. How he enjoyed boating.

Speeches were made and food was served at the table and it was delicious - Flæskesteg, Jacob told him. Buddy felt full and happy, trying desperately to ignore the crawl under his skin - the itch to reach for a drink. He could feel sweat prickling up his back. A sickness washing over him.

"Are you okay?" Jacob's words were soft and spoken close to his ear. Buddy nodded, trembling slightly as he felt Jacob move his chair closer and then pull him back so that Buddy rested against him. "If it's too much-"

"No." Buddy shook his head and forced a smile. He wanted to be in that moment, the feeling of strange normality it gave him. It was grounding and kind of wonderful. His smile started to come easier at the thought.

Jacob returned the smile and lifted his hand to brush his lips over Buddy's knuckles. Buddy felt his face heat. Jacob had looked a little hesitant as he had done it, maybe that he wasn't used to showing such affection in public, or at least not to a man. Perhaps elsewhere it might be different, but here, surrounded by people who obviously cared for him a great deal. And by extension were very welcoming of Buddy. He had never imagined this could ever be the case.

The MC stood and made some more announcements that Buddy didn't understand, before Anna and her husband stood and began their first dance. They were universally admired by the room as Lila had been days, or years, earlier. It was a strange thought and rather than sadden Buddy, it lifted him. She would be happy or she wouldn't, and would continue through life with that fire in her belly that meant she wouldn't stomach unhappiness long. There was no influence he could ever have over that, if he had remained or not. But he thought of his own happiness, and how Lila would smile to see him sat with his hand in Jacob's - rather than around a glass of wine - as they watched the dancing. She would have

traded everything for his happiness, as he would have for hers. He just wished she could have known. His letter to her would have to suffice.

After a few minutes, other couples began to join Anna and Felix on the dancefloor. Moving slowly, their bodies pressed together in a way that had made Buddy sick with envy at Lila's wedding, but now just made him feel light.

Buddy's attention was drawn by an older man at the next table, who stood and reached out a hand, laughing and smiling as a man seated next to him took it. They fell into a near embrace and then walked out to the dancefloor. When they too started to slow dance Buddy was mesmerised as a moth to a flame. The image of them seering into his mind and burning him with something sour. Not jealousy, as it might have been, but... a kind of anger. That this was so free to them. That it would never have been that easy for him. It was an anger a long time coming, that he knew he had no right to now. Years of his mother's words told him what they were doing was wrong, of course it was. Had been told so in many ways.

Jacob's soft words broke his thoughts and he realised Jacob was following his gaze -

"Would you like to dance?"

Buddy shook his head almost violently, that anger balling sour in his gut and making him feel all the more sick. The same way he had felt sick when his mother had given him that *look* that told him that she perceived his behaviour to be effeminate - sissy. The feeling he had of sickness and shame he'd had every time he'd been remotely intimate with a man.

Apart from Jacob.

Who looked at him now with confusion and concern. It made him think about the girls he had fooled around with - the equal but different sickness he felt with them from the moment they touched. At least with a man it felt right - until it was over, and then it wasn't. With women it had just made his skin crawl and his soul shrink.

And now there was Jacob, and he wanted to dance with him as those two older men danced so happily. It hurt everything in Buddy's brain as he tried to fathom it all. It was too overwhelming to try in that moment, to consider his place in the world.

"Hey." Jacob objected as Buddy reached for the bottle of red in the centre of the table. An objection, but it was still tentative, like he didn't want to control Buddy. Like drinking or not drinking had to be his choice. And it was a choice now where it never felt like it had been before.

Buddy's hand dropped and he choked back and sob that hurt his throat.

"Excuse me." He managed to croak before pushing back his chair and making his way out of the room.

*

Despite following after Buddy immediately, Jacob didn't get to the doors in time to see which way he had gone. He looked back into the room and was glad they didn't appear to have made any kind of scene. Anna was still dancing with Felix, a dreamy look on her face, and Helene was dancing with her brother, joking as they moved.

Everyone was settling in for a pleasant evening and there were no more specifics arrangements other than the firework display to take place on the lawn at 10pm.

It was almost full dark when Jacob found Buddy outside, standing at the edge of the patio that overlooked the side of the lawn. There was a chill to the wind and Buddy had his arms wrapped around himself, but didn't seem to just be a result of the cold.

Jacob approached him tentatively, walking along the patio behind him before joining him at the top of the steps down to the grass.

"Are you alright?"

Buddy shook his head and there were tears clearly in his eyes.

"It's all a bit much." He managed to say after a couple of deep breaths.

Jacob's heart sank. Of course Buddy would want to go home, how weird this must all be for him. He realised he couldn't have imagined staying in Buddy's time so why would Buddy feel any different being here?

He put a gentle hand on Buddy's shoulder. "Come back inside, rest a bit. Then we can work it out. I got back here, there must be a way of getting you home. If we get the car back out to that stretch of road-"

"No." Buddy near shouted the word, his eyes wide with something like fear as he turned to look at Jacob. "I don't want to go back. I want to be here. I want..." He trailed off for a moment. "I'm overwhelmed, I just didn't... it's so different here. Not the keys." He made a motion with his hand indicating the key card for the room, which made Jacob smile. "The people... the... those men in there being able to dance together in front of everyone like that."

The words came out as a hiss of disdain that surprised Jacob for a moment, lessening as Buddy's features softened and his lower lip wobbled a little as though he might start to cry.

"People have been tough on you Buddy, and I don't want you to ever think you deserved that. I know things were different where you were, but... there is nothing wrong with who you are and who you love." Jacob might as well be saying the words to himself, knowing them to be true despite having denied them for so long until Buddy. "It's not perfect, and honestly, you'll still get shit for it. But it... it isn't how things were. It *is* better."

Buddy nodded his understanding, now biting at his trembling lip.

It seemed very clear that Buddy's experiences had filled him with a shame and self-loathing that no one should ever feel. Jacob hated that, but he equally knew it was something Buddy

had to work out for himself, regardless of how much support Jacob could offer him.

"It... isn't just that." Buddy's mouth was turned down in a way that only happened when someone's sadness was totally consuming. "I, I guess I'm a little unwell.... I don't know when I've been this long without a drink." He let out a mirthless chuckle. "But it's hard... I don't want to drink, but I do all the same... a compulsion." He was rubbing his hands up and down his arm - nervous. "But, even so... I feel oddly free. I'm overwhelmed by this feeling of... of *something*. It feels so alien to just feel free to be comfortable and happy. For the first time in my life I feel like I can be myself and I never thought that would happen. I never dreamed..." He shook his head. "I thought I'd spend my whole life drinking to be numb until... I just didn't wake up one day. Until I disappeared. I never thought beyond that before."

Jacob nodded, feeling a little sick in his stomach at the thought of how unhappy Buddy's life had been.

"I saw the looks from my family, my mother. When I was drunk and oafish, and I saw the look of disgust and shame in her eyes. And beneath that there was something else, a relief - better a drunk than a homosexual." Buddy sobbed on the last word. "That was more shame than she could bear." His words broke into a sob.

They were suddenly standing too far apart. Jacob closed the space in a short step but didn't reach out, unsure of what Buddy wanted or needed.

All his life he had denied this about himself. Yes, he could imagine losing some family and friends if he'd come out years ago. Maybe there were times when he might have been beaten up or called names. But for Buddy that hadn't even been an option.

"Buddy, I-" Words seemed meaningless when all he wanted to do was give comfort and continue to give it for as long as Buddy needed it. Even if that was forever.

Buddy suddenly moved to him, almost stumbling - pressing his lips in a quick kiss that wasn't so much tentative as it seemed sure to be rejected despite everything that had already happened between them. Buddy stumbled back, his face flushed with a residual shame he seemed still unable to shake.

Jacob reached for him and pulled him into his arms, pressing his lips to his brow and then his cheek before nuzzling into his neck.

"You don't have to go back, kaere." Jacob whispered against him. "You can stay here, I will help you. Whatever you need."

He felt Buddy melt into him with a whimper.

When fireworks went off overhead, they both looked up, the crackle in the sky an echo of the teacup they had both seen.

Six Months Later

“Oh, no... not that one.” Anna erupted into a fit of laughter that had her holding the small bump of her belly.

Jacob narrowed his eyes at her and took off the sweater.

“It’s too stuffy, you look like a school teacher or something.” She was still giggling as she eased herself onto his sofa. Why she had managed to choose today of all days to stop by for a visit was a mystery. “Here, just put this one back on.” She felt around behind her until she had hold of the adidas hoodie jacket that he had been wearing earlier in the day. It seemed too casual, and very much not romantic.

He started to object when she threw it at his head and continued.

“Dad, come on. He’s not going to expect you to be dressed up. Besides, you’re going to a movie, not the opera.” There was that pleased grin she had on her face whenever Buddy came up in conversation. Anna had become somewhat obsessed with making sure he was happy and settled - apparently all good grandpas should be, was her reasoning.

As far as Jacob was concerned, Anna - and just about everyone else - knew a little too much about his love life. Or lack thereof.

After the wedding, Buddy had come back to Copenhagen with Jacob. But he had stayed with Helene. He had immediately started at a local alcoholic support group and found a sponsor. Anna had found him a job working for their charity. After a couple of months he moved out into his own little studio apartment in the city.

They saw each other a couple of times a week at least. Sometimes for lunch, sometimes coffee, or a group dinner. They never visited each other’s homes, were never intimate. Just friends.

Jacob had realised immediately that that was all it could be, and Buddy had understood. It would do Buddy no good to come to rely on him as anything more than friends, whilst he tried to kick his habit. They needed to be separate entities, and Buddy had agreed all the more readily after speaking with his sponsor, Emil.

For months now they had been no more than friends as far as they were concerned, and yet anyone and everyone knew different just from looking at them. That with every lunch and coffee they fell all the more in love regardless of their separation from each other. No dates, no sex... but nothing could stop the love between them.

And then a few days ago Buddy had called him. He had become pretty proficient at texting once he got the hang of the mobile phone, but never called. It had been ridiculously nice to hear Buddy’s voice that evening, and had taken everything in him not to suggestively ask what Buddy was wearing or something equally as stupid. Which was maybe also why Buddy hadn’t called up until now.

But Buddy had said - “So... In a few days I’ll be six months sober. I wanted to celebrate.”

“Yeah?” Jacob had replied, grinning, his heart full of pride.

“Yeah, I was talking to Emil. I just... I wanted to run it past him, get his thoughts because... Well, Jacob, I kind of thought that, being six months sober and just, well... feeling better in myself.” He trailed off thoughtfully and Jacob wondered what the hell he was trying to get at, his smile fading a little with concern. He knew Buddy had been seeing a therapist too, a friend of Emil doing it pro bono through some LGBT organisation in the city. Every time he saw Buddy, he could see a man who was the essence of the one he had met - but with a true confidence not provided by alcohol, with a good sense of self and an inner acceptance of who he was. It had taken him time to work to it, but he was doing great. Whatever he was trying to work up to say surely couldn’t be bad?

“I just... feel like I’m doing ok, and that there isn’t that temptation there to rely on the support of others beyond my support groups. So I just thought, and Emil said it was a good idea, I just... I thought... Maybe we could go out on a date?”

Jacob had been so suddenly nervous that he had barely been able to arrange the time and day before they hung up. He had been nervous every since. Unable to stop himself remembering those times they’d had together during the couple of days they had shared. The sex, but also the intimacy. He wanted to damn well wake up next to Buddy and had to admit he was terrified Buddy wouldn’t feel the same now he was sober.

“That’s much better.” Anna commented, pulling him back from his thoughts as he shrugged into the jacket. “Are you meeting him at the cinema?” She asked, awkwardly rising from the chair that was increasingly too low the larger her bump grew.

Jacob shook his head. “No, he’s coming here to pick me up then we’re going to drive to-”

He was cut off by her roar of laughter. “Oh my god. Jacob! The way you two make eyes at each other every time you are in the same room...” She could barely speak through her laughter. “Well, I guess we’ll see you in a week or two.” She was laughing so much that there were tears in her eyes.

He narrowed his at her and pointed at the door. “I shall see you tomorrow for lunch at your mother’s, as planned.”

Anna nodded, still laughing uncontrollably as she let herself out of the front door. Jacob huffed.

*

Buddy was vibrating with nerves as he walked up the stairs to Jacob’s apartment. He had never been in, and couldn’t help but wonder how much it gave away about the man. He could be somewhat stoic, and yet they were always easy with each other, in a way that melted Buddy completely.

He had never set a date in his head, just knew that at some point he would have been sober long enough that it felt right to do this. And, in truth, it had felt right for a while, but he had been terrified to act on it. Emil gave him the final push. But, he was so scared that Jacob wouldn’t like him as he had before. In that whirlwind couple of days that had brought them

together, it hadn't been real life. Not like now. Some days life was so damn real that it felt like everything before coming here had been a dream.

He might have believed it was had he not looked up his family. He'd done one of those family history things on the internet - an amazing and eye opening world - and tracked down his sister. She had passed a few years earlier, and he was noted as having disappeared the day he left with Jacob.

There were a few relatives still alive - Lila's grandson for one. His name was Jack and he bore a remarkable resemblance to Buddy, something he was sure would have made Lila smile.

That was another life though, he didn't even feel a temptation to make contact with any of them. It would be too hard, could he explain who he was? Or if not keep it a secret? The thought of hiding who he was from anyone was not something he was willing to do anymore. He couldn't even stomach the thought of it - there had already been too much of that in his life.

He took a deep breath and steadied himself before knocking on Jacob's door. He had wanted to come here first so they could talk, relax in each other's company before the silence of the movie in a space that wasn't a bar. And he had to admit he was curious to see how Jacob lived. There had been a time in those first few days when he thought he might live with Jacob. That they could carry on away from the world, just the two of them in a hotel room forever.

Nervousness was washing over him as Buddy waited at the door. When Jacob opened it Buddy let out a relieved breath - Jacob looked as nervous as he did.

"Buddy... hi, um... Come in." Jacob tripped over his words and that made Buddy feel even more relieved. He was glad not to be the only one who was feeling the pressure of this night.

Buddy stepped inside the door and Jacob closed it behind him. After a moment, Buddy remembered the gift of chocolates in his hand and held them out for Jacob, who blushed as he took them.

"You shouldn't have, thank you..." Jacob's words still sounded nervous.

"Du er velkommen." Buddy replied in Danish. In that area he progressing well, his accent wasn't too bad but his comprehension still needed some work. He was doing well at a lot of things now that he was sober and not using every last ounce of energy trying to hide himself from everyone around him.

Jacob's face lit up at the Danish words and they fell into a silent contemplation of each other for a moment.

Buddy wasn't sure who moved first but suddenly their bodies collided and Buddy allowed Jacob to win out - finding himself pressed against the door as a reward. They devoured each other like starving men.

As Jacob's entire body slotted against his from head to toe, Buddy felt the press of a quickly thickening cock against his fly.

Jacob broke the kiss with a wet, smacking sound, his lips immediately finding Buddy's neck. He let out a groan and let his head drop back against the door to give Jacob more to explore.

"Do you still want to see the movie? I... I hadn't meant for this to happen. I want you so much." Jacob muttered desperately against his skin and Buddy found himself nodding.

"I've missed you... it's been so hard to stay away. I don't want to anymore, I don't want to ever be away from you again-"

Buddy's words were lost to a sudden and sharp moan as Jacob nudged his thigh between Buddy's and started to grind against him.

Their mouths found each other again, wet and imprecise in their desperation. The kiss was hungry and Buddy relished the feeling of Jacob's hands coming up to cup his face and hold him in it. Buddy's own hands found their way to Jacob's hips, fingers hooking into his belt to pull their groins tight together.

The rhythmic actions of their mouths was mirrored in their bodies. They rut against each other, unthinking as they tried to claim each other in a way they had denied themselves for too long. The times they had been intimate flashed in Buddy's memory. He wanted to recreate them all, and more.

He ground against Jacob's thigh, his cock leaking in response to the delicious friction. Jacob pinned him against the door and thrust their clothed cocks together - each crush of hardness against his own bringing Buddy ever closer to climax.

Buddy took a gasping breath when Jacob broke the kiss with a strangled cry, shuddering against him even as his hips stuttered to a stop. The sound and sight was enough to undo Buddy completely. He pushed his own hips forward, two more thrusts as Jacob whimpered, before he too spilled himself inside his trousers.

They were still then but for the uncontrolled shaking of their bodies. They both took deep and uneven breaths, panting as they came down from their shared climax.

After a few shuddering breaths Jacob let out a low chuckle before looking at him and smiling.

"I'm sorry, I..." Jacob shook his head. "I haven't come in my pants since I was a teenager." He chuckled again and leaned his forehead against Buddy's.

"I don't think I want to watch the movie anymore." Buddy answered with his own chuckle.

There was silence again as they stood, their forehead's still touching. Their breathing started to even out and finally Buddy - thinking of all the times they had ahead of them to strengthen the connection that had been there from the moment they met - said-

"Jacob, take me to bed."

Jacob's laugh was light and relieved. He kissed Buddy again, his smile all teeth and charm.

"I'd love nothing more..." Jacob trailed off and pulled back, smiling as he took Buddy's hands in his. "I just have to let Helene and Anna know I can't make it to lunch tomorrow."

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